

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans

Statement

Testimony of David Bunn
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Before the Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation,
Wildlife & Oceans
Committee on Resources, United States House of Representatives
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Comments for H.R. 2798

Good morning. My name is David Bunn. I am the Deputy Director for Legislative Affairs for the California Department of Fish and Game.

I am here today to testify regarding the Pacific Salmon Recovery Act, H.R. 2798.

On behalf of Director Bob Hight and the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) I wish to express our appreciation for the commitment of Congress to provide significant funding to pacific coastal states for habitat restoration for threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead populations.

The \$9 million in federal funds we will receive this year will complement and enhance California's commitment to habitat restoration projects.

The Status of Salmon and Steelhead in California

Coho Salmon are listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) as threatened on the Central and Northern California Coast and endangered south of San Francisco Bay pursuant to the California Endangered Species Act.

Steelhead are listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act as endangered in Southern California and threatened on the South Central and Central California Coast and proposed for listing as threatened in Northern California. Steelhead are also a candidate species for listing in the Klamath Mountains Province.

California Coastal Chinook Salmon are listed as threatened under ESA, while Sacramento River winter-run Chinook are endangered and spring-run Chinook are threatened.

California is Expanding Coastal Salmon Habitat Restoration Efforts

California's Fishery Restoration Grants Program began in 1981. About a million dollars was appropriated to restore salmon and steelhead habitat.

Subsequent funds were designated to improve instream conditions by constructing structures designed to develop or maintain pools, provide overhead cover or collect and distributed suitable spawning gravels for salmon and steelhead trout.

In 1997, Senate Bill 271, authored by the then California State Senator Mike Thompson, was enacted by the Legislature. This bill provided much needed new funding and gave focus to our expanded coastal salmon recovery program. SB 271 augmented instream recovery efforts and provided for upslope restoration, and provided for outreach to and cooperative efforts with watershed landowners.

Californians have expressed strong support for conservation and habitat restoration. The passage of Propositions 12 and 13 in March, with a vote exceeding 62 percent on both measures, demonstrated strong public approval of habitat acquisition, restoration, and enhancement. The voters approved \$50 million in these two bond acts specifically for salmon habitat restoration projects. The Governor proposed on May 15th, that \$15 million of the funds be made available next state fiscal year for restoration projects, to be administered by DFG and the State Coastal Conservancy.

The First \$9 Million of Federal Dollars will Fund Restoration Projects this Summer

Two weeks ago, the California Department of Fish and Game and Resources Agency signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Marine Fisheries Service regarding the expenditure of the \$9 million of federal funds for salmon and steelhead habitat restoration projects this year.

The MOU:

- Describes the process by which our Department will identify, evaluate and select habitat restoration projects for funding.
- Establishes criteria to ensure that the federal money will be spent on projects that provide the greatest benefit to salmon habitat restoration.
- Identifies our Department's responsibility for providing technical review of all projects considered for funding.
- Establishes an advisory committee of restoration experts, local government representatives, conservation practitioners, and other stakeholders to provide input to the Department for the evaluation of projects.

Pursuant to this MOU, our Department is evaluating projects currently and will approve projects for funding for this summer.

H.R. 2798 and Continued Federal Support are Critical for Successful Salmon Recovery

Over the next decade it will be critical for the Federal Government to provide significant funding for salmon and steelhead habitat restoration efforts.

The California Department of Fish and Game looks forward to working with the National Marine Fisheries Service on restoration efforts over the next decade.

I want to thank this committee for the opportunity to present these comments. I would be pleased to answer any questions.

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